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Richmond Times
Oct. '83

To keep 'The Company' on a roll, build a theme park at Langley



DIVERSIONS

By Steve Clark

The cover story in a recent issue of Newsweek magazine reported that the Central Intelligence Agency, under the leadership of tax lawyer William J. Casey, is on a roll.

According to the article, the CIA has pulled out of a long tailspin, which began with the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, and "is back in business."

"The Company," as the CIA is known by its employees, is sponsoring covert operations all over the globe, according to the article. Business is so good at "The Company" that it is planning to hire 3,000 additional employees and spend \$100 million expanding its Northern Virginia headquarters facility at Langley near McLean.

Covert operations aren't cheap

Americans don't know much about the CIA, which is understandable. If you ran a company that hired people to sabotage competing companies, you'd be close-mouthed about it, too.

But one thing we do know about the CIA. It doesn't operate on a shoestring. Covert operations, like lovers' rendezvous, don't come cheap. How much the CIA spends is something we don't know. You can't look at the federal budget and see how much money is appropriated for "The

Company." A lot of money earmarked for the CIA is hidden in the annual appropriations of other federal agencies.

That practice is downright sneaky, and ever since I read about it, I have been trying to figure out a way in which the CIA could be more self-supporting.

In the interest of saving tax dollars, we need a way for "The Company" to make money as well as spend it, and I believe I have come up with the perfect scheme: Build a theme park around the CIA's facility at Langley.

You laugh, but this idea has wonderful possibilities. First of all, millions of American tourists would flock to a CIA theme park because Americans are infatuated with espionage. The next time you're in a public library or a bookstore, check out the shelves of new novels. It seems 75 percent of them are about espionage. The spy novel has become so popular that the way to get rich is to write a good spy thriller. Just ask Robert Ludlum. Hollywood also knows espionage sells. James Bond keeps on filling seats in movie theaters.

The proven success of espionage in the entertainment field makes me confident that a theme park at Langley would attract millions of tourists annually. To get the plan rolling, the first thing we have to do is come up with a good name. I have several suggestions:

- "Spy World."
- "Espionage Gardens."
- "Agents' Dominion."
- "Six Hidden Cameras Over Virginia."
- "Mole Island."

All of these names have merit, but I would vote for "Spy World." It's short and to the point.

Now that we've got a name, we've got to plan the park. I like the way Busch Gardens near Williamsburg is divided into different countries of the world, and "Spy World" could be divided into areas that support the espionage theme.

One area would have to be called Istanbul, in honor of the mecca of espionage. Another area could be called Gorky Street, in tribute to the KGB. Certainly there should be an area called Berlin, with a wall covered with barbed wire right through the middle of it. And one area definitely should be called the United Nations, in honor of that "nest of spies" beside the East River.

A train instead of a roller coaster

Rides. A theme park has to have rides. At "Spy World," the big ride would be not a roller coaster but a train connecting all areas of the park.

It doesn't sound thrilling, but you could make it thrilling. You could bring the train to screeching stops at several checkpoints, where tough-looking guards with police dogs would board and ask the passengers for their passports. (I forgot to mention that the ticket you would buy at the entrance gate would look like a passport.) Any passenger who failed to produce a passport would be whisked off the train and taken to a dank cell, where interrogators would shine hot lights in his eyes and ask

questions such as, "What are you doing here?" After a half-hour of interrogation, the tourist would be turned loose and allowed to return to the park.

In the gift shop, you could sell such items as his-and-her trench coats, sunglasses with hidden tape recorders, fake passports, cigarette lighters that take pictures. You get the idea.

You may believe the CIA never would allow a theme park to be built on its property. Granted, visitors who drive up to the gate every day are turned away because no public tours are conducted at Langley.

But recently the CIA showed signs of relaxing its security. About 300 McLean residents were allowed inside the CIA headquarters building to attend a public hearing in which the residents protested traffic problems they expect to accompany the CIA's expansion. It was the first time the CIA has ever allowed such a thing.

If the CIA is willing to play host to a public hearing and listen to citizens gripe about traffic conditions, then the time may be closer than you think when the CIA would consider allowing millions of fun-seeking tourists through the barbed wire gates.

CIA Director Casey is a millionaire, and millionaires drool at the thought of making big profits. If he could be convinced that "Spy World" has the potential to keep "The Company" on a roll, he might go for it.

After all, spies are like pool hustlers. They need plenty of walking-around money. "Spy World" could make sure they don't leave the home office without it.